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C O N F I D E N T I A L BAKU 000062

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/12/2017

TAGS: PREL PGOV PHUM KDEM AJ

SUBJECT: AZERBAIJANI OPPOSITION PARTY STILL UNABLE TO
ACCESS ITS POSSESSIONS AT RELOCATED OFFICES

Classified By: Acting DCM Joan Polaschik for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (U) At the request of Popular Front Party (PFP) Deputy Chairman Fuad Mustafayev, on January 10 Poloff visited the offices to which the PFP was assigned following the party's November 25, 2006 eviction from 33 Khagani Street. The PFP's assigned new office space is the second floor of an annex to a concrete factory on the outskirts of Baku. The building, largely occupied by IDPs, is in deplorable condition and is uninhabitable, lacking heating, windows, electricity, and flooring in many places. Mustafayev said that police continue to deny the party officials access to their property and effects which were left at the relocated office building after the eviction. At the site, Poloff spoke with two police officers who confirmed that they were not authorized to allow the PFP to retrieve its materials, most of which was heavily damaged.

¶2. (U) Mustafayev again said that the PFP will not occupy the building and will continue to operate out of the temporary space it has been provided at Azerbaijan Democratic Party's (ADP) headquarters in Baku. Mustafayev also reported that landlords in Baku are unwilling to rent office space to the PFP because it is an opposition party and will "cause them trouble" with the authorities.

¶3. (C) Charge spoke with Presidential Advisor Ali Hasanov January 11 to convey USG concern about the PFP's inability to access its property and equipment. Charge told Hasanov the PFP's inability to access its property was contrary to the earlier assurances given to the Ambassador by Presidential Chief of Staff Ramiz Mehdiyev. Hasanov agreed and told Charge that the "police shouldn't do that" and that he would take steps to remedy the situation. Charge conveyed Poloff's observations of the deplorable conditions at the assigned facility; Hasanov also agreed that the facilities are poor.

HYLAND